

2012

Town of Wallace Revitalization Plan



Prepared by:
Eastern Carolina Council
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Acknowledgements

In 2011 the Town of Wallace selected the Eastern Carolina Council to develop a Revitalization Plan for the Town which encompassed two distinct areas: the downtown Commercial Historic District and the Highway 117 Commercial Corridor. Interested community leaders were invited to a series of meetings to identify the issues and to draft potential solutions. The following is a list of individuals who attended and signed in at one or more of these meetings which were held between February and June 2012:

Blackburn, Mary H.	Farrior, Charley	Perry, Jim
Blackburn, Michael	Farrior, Harriet	Powell, Lou
Blanton, Tommy	Farrior, Shella	Santore, Joe
Boney, Kerry	Farrior, Wade	Santore, Terry
Bracken, Leo	Fussell, Lisa	Schuyler, Sharon
Brinkley, Earl	Gantt, James	Simpson, Curt
Canady, Wanda	Hepler, David	Simpson, Regina
Carcopo, Marlane	Hunter, Anne	Teachy, J. D.
Carter, Jeff	Livingston, Matt	Townsend, Sandra
Casson, Hugh	Merritt, Jeralene	Townsend, Thomas
Cavanaugh, AJ	Nichols III, J. L.	Wilson, Joan
Edgerton, Thomas	Nicholson, Jackie	Wilson, Ken

We thank these community leaders for their input and their sincere interest in improving the town.

This plan would not have been possible without the invaluable guidance of Town Manager Matt Livingston, the Mayor Charles Farrior, Jr. and the committee members.

This process was facilitated by Economic and Community Development Director Judy Hills of the Eastern Carolina Council of Governments.

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Background

The Town of Wallace, located in southwestern Duplin County, is partly located in Pender County. It encompasses a land area of 2.57 square. The town was incorporated in 1873 as Duplin Roads. In 1899 it was reincorporated as Wallace in honor of an official of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. Wallace has a prime location alongside I-40. NC Highway 117 and NC Highway 41 intersect within the town. NC Highway 41 is designated as a truck route by the NC Department of Transportation. It bisects the downtown Commercial Historic District.

The railroad has played an important role in the development of Wallace. In 1840 a railway line was built through the town as part of the Wilmington and Raleigh which later became the Wilmington and Weldon (W&W). During the Civil War the Wilmington-to-Raleigh stretch of the railroad would be vital to the Confederate war effort; supplies shipped into Wilmington would be moved by rail through Raleigh to the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. After the Civil War, in 1893 it became the Atlantic Coastline Railroad and the town prospered because of the railroad. In 1967 the Atlantic Coastline Railroad became part of the Seaboard Coast Line. A passenger train still operated on these rails until 1967. In 1982 the line became part of CSX. CSX abandoned the line in 1986 although CSX still operates the line from Wallace to Goldsboro and Wilson. Wallace is the terminus of this CSX route. At this time interested parties are attempting to get this line reopened from Wallace to Castle Hayne for both passenger and freight service.

The train Depot was renovated and now houses the Wallace Chamber of Commerce, a museum featuring local artifacts and rental meeting space. Alongside the Depot awaiting renovation sits a mail car on a siding. Another distinctive feature of the historic downtown district is a restored elevated clock. There are benches on the square beneath the clock which rests beside the railroad tracks.

In 1994 the Wallace Revitalization Association worked on a plan to secure Historic District status for the downtown Commercial Historic District. The title of “Wallace Commercial Historic District” was awarded to the town by the US Department of the Interior in 1995. A plaque commemorating this achievement was erected in the James R. Sykes Park which is located on the corner of Main and Railroad Streets.

Around 2008 the Walmart store which had been located in the Wallace Crossing shopping plaza moved from that location on Highway 117 to the area known as Tin City, on Highway 41 near I-40. Once Walmart situated in Tin City, other businesses were attracted to shopping centers that sprung up in that area.

River Landing is a nearby private, gated, residential golf community covering over 1,700 acres on the banks of the northeast Cape Fear River. Residents from this upscale community shop in Wallace. River Landing is not located within the corporate limits of the Town of Wallace.

Wallace hosts a yearly Carolina Strawberry Festival that is held in May. In 2012 this festival was a resounding success.

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Community Data

The Census 2010 total population for Wallace was 3,880. In 2000 it was 3,344, so there has been some growth. The Census 2010 shows that there are:

- 818 children under the age of 16;
- 200 between the ages of 16 and 20,
- 2,055 between the ages of 21 and 64 and
- 807 age 65 and older.

Housing statistics from Census 2010:

- 1,621 households
- average household size of 2.35
- average family size of 3.07
- 564 live alone
- 574 households have one or more persons age 65 and older (35.4%)
- 1,621 occupied housing units
 - 850 owner occupied (52.4%)
 - 771 renter occupied (47.6).

Race from Census 2010:

- 53.2% white
- 26.4% Black or African American
- Of the total population 25.5% indicate they are Hispanic or Latino.

Other information:

- 3,004 of the population are age 16 and older
 - Of that 1,693 are in the labor force
 - 1,512 are employed
 - 181 are unemployed
 - 1,145 drove alone in a car, truck or van to work
 - 100 walked to work
 - 0 worked at home
 - 21.7 minutes was the mean time to travel to work
- 11.3% of the population are veterans
- 65.5% of the population graduated from high school
- 20.1% have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

The median household income was \$29,898 (for North Carolina it is \$45,570). The poverty rate for all families is 11.0% (for North Carolina it is 15.5%).

Housing characteristics:

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- 71.6% (high) of the housing units are single family homes
- 7.7 % (low) are mobile homes
- 37.9% (high) of homes were built between 1939 and 1959
- 58.2% (low) of the homes were built between 1960 and 1999
- 3.9% (very low) of the homes were built 2000 or later
- Median value of owner-occupied units is \$101,000 (high for Duplin County, but low when compared to NC and US).

What projections or conclusions might be drawn from this data?

- The population age 65 and older is high (20.8%) which means that more services may be needed for this population in the near future. Many of these individual as they age will be unable to continue to keep up their property. Some will need to sell their homes and with many of the homes being older—they may have difficulty doing so. This might mean an increase in the number of vacant houses (which may deteriorate) or an increase in the number of houses being rented because they cannot be sold due to condition.
- Single family homes represent 71.6% of the available dwelling units. This means there are fewer housing options for those interested in locating in Wallace.
- There is a 47.6% renter occupancy rate which is high. It is generally acknowledged that owner-occupied units are preferable to communities as owners are generally more vested in the community and take better care of the property.
- Only 3.95% of the housing stock is younger than 10 years old (very low) and 58.2% of the homes were built prior to 1960 (over 50 years old). Many younger people are not attracted to older housing due to the cost of renovations and their lack of handiwork skills. Young families also want to locate in communities with good schools. Older homes that don't sell often become rentals which may drive up the already high percentage of renters in the town.
- Those of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity represent 25.3% of the population which is very high when compared to NC and US figures. This number might have something to do with the high percentage of renters.
- All this has implications for the retail establishments located in and near town.

ESRI Retail MarketPlace Profile (Leakage Study)

On June 19, 2012 the ESRI Retail MarketPlace Profile report was created and printed for the Town of Wallace. The profile consists of three defined areas with town hall as the center. The three areas are concentric circles or rings of a 1-mile radius, a 3-mile radius, and a 5-mile radius.

It is important to recognize that market forces are in constant flux and that the raw data provided in this report represents a point in time and may or may not accurately represent the current and future local economy. Continuous updating and monitoring is required to present a more accurate picture of Wallace's retail establishments.

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For each area the following summary demographics were noted:

Demographic	1-mile	3-miles	5-miles
2010 Population	3,465	6,705	10,134
2010 Households	1,443	2,675	3,993
2010 Median Disposable Income	\$27,434	\$28,434	\$29,234
2010 Per Capita Income	\$17,301	\$17,730	\$18,100

The analysis is a complicated one that takes into account many factors including the downturn of the economy. A white paper discussing the 2010 methodology can be viewed at <http://www.esri.com/library/whitepapers/pdfs/esri-data-retail-marketplace.pdf>. The report identifies the NAICS code for standard retail industry groups. For each of the retail NAICS codes the report calculates the demand and the supply in current dollars. When the demand (retail potential in that circle) exceeds the supply (retail sales in that circle) that means there is an opportunity (or leakage)—locals are buying outside of the circle. When the supply exceeds the demand that means there is more that can be purchased than the market will bear. These factors are given ranges from +100 (total leakage/opportunity) to -100 (total surplus). Here is the industry summary for the three areas:

Industry Summary	1-mile	3-miles	5-miles
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	-57.9	-46.3	-33.3
Total Retail Trade	-60.1	-48.6	-35.6
Total Food & Drink	-32.1	-23.4	-11.8

What this industry summary shows, at least on paper, is that there is more supply than there is demand in the market within a 5-mile area of Wallace. While one can choose to ignore these figures, it is reports like these that industries use to decide where to open and close stores.

The report breaks out the various retail trades and there are a few areas of opportunity in the 5-mile radius of Wallace:

<u>1-Mile</u>			
NAICS	Descriptor	Leakage	Gap
4412	Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	100	\$372,778
4422	Home Furnishing Stores	18	\$48,889
451	Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	23	\$71,572
4521	Department Stores	90.8	\$1,477,806
454	Non-store Retailers	100	\$135,942
7223	Special Food Services	100	\$18,588

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3-Mile

4412	Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	100	\$773,207
4422	Home Furnishing Stores	41.5	\$186,808
444	Bldg. Materials, Garden Equip., Supply Stores	5.3	\$194,763
447	Gasoline Stores	1.9	\$345,216
451	Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	16.5	\$109,738
454	Non-store Retailers	100	\$238,684

5-Mile

4412	Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	100	\$1,235,595
4422	Home Furnishing Stores	58.3	\$368,406
444	Bldg. Materials, Garden Equip., Supply Stores	23.5	\$1,134,386
447	Gasoline Stores	20.6	\$4,745,386
451	Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	21.3	\$214,933
4532	Office Supplies, Stationery, Gift Stores	4.8	\$31,625
454	Non-store Retailers	100	\$342,547
7224	Drinking Places--Alcoholic beverages	8.7	\$65,459

The full ESRI report is located in the Appendix.

Current status

Wallace has a number of groups interested in revitalizing the downtown Commercial Historic District as well as the Highway 117 corridor which has three large deteriorating shopping centers which are mostly vacant. Some commercial structures along the Highway 117 corridor are vacant. These vacancies primarily occurred when new shopping areas were built in Tin City (outskirts of town near the I-40 exit) and the businesses moved. The Town Board, the Wallace Committee of 100, the Wallace Chamber of Commerce and the Wallace Revitalization Association are keenly aware of the need to improve both these areas if the town is to attract new residents, industry and retail businesses. In order to receive technical assistance to revitalize the town, Wallace applied to the NC Small Town Main Street Program in mid-2011, but was not accepted. Realizing that it needed professional assistance, the Town contracted with the Eastern Carolina Council to develop a Revitalization Plan. Additionally the Town applied to be in the NC Rural Center's Small Town Economic Prosperity initiative in 2012, but was likewise not selected. Below is the timeline of activities.

Timeline

5/18/11	Application for NC Small Town Main Street Program—not selected
11/10/11	Agreement signed with Eastern Carolina Council to develop a Revitalization Plan which was to include the historic downtown Wallace business district as well as the Highway 117 corridor

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1/9/12	Data collection commenced
2/10/12	NC STEP Application to Rural Center—not selected for funding
2/23/12	Initial meeting with community leaders—SWOT--Downtown
4/2/12	Community meeting—SWOT—Highway 117
5/2/12	Community meeting—Downtown strategies
5/8/12	Community meeting—Highway 117 strategies
5/31/12	Community meeting—demographics, preliminary recommendations
6/19/12	Community meeting—ESRI retail leakage report, financing renovations
7/10/12	Draft of Wallace Revitalization Plan submitted to Town

Challenges

Like many eastern North Carolina rural communities, Wallace is dependent upon agriculture and a limited industrial base. It is recognized that tourism, arts, culture, history, and downtown development are the cornerstones of growing a healthy economy to supplement agriculture and industry. So what challenges does Wallace face in growing a healthy economy?

- Harnessing creativity is one way forward, but Wallace appears to lack a strong, cohesive creative community (i.e., arts and culture).
- Wallace is not generally thought of as a tourist destination as there is little of interest in the Town of Wallace or the immediate vicinity.
- Retail, restaurant, and service businesses are dependent upon sufficient population, which Wallace lacks. The population in a 5-mile radius of Wallace is only 10,134. The per capita income of that same area is only \$18,100 (low when compared to NC and US).
- The Highway 117 Corridor is unsightly to a newcomer who enters town on that road.
- The large number of vacancies in the town commercial areas presents a bad picture to potential small business owners.
- The vacancies and condition of the buildings in the downtown Commercial Historic District paint a picture of a town that has seen better days.
- The dilapidated railroad mail car which sits next to the Depot overshadows the renovations to the Depot as it is the first thing noticed when viewing the Depot.
- Highway 41 which is an NCDOT Truck Route bisects the downtown Commercial Historic District. Trucks hauling pigs, turkeys and chickens roll through the downtown and create a bad odor.
- The speed limit on Highway 41 through the downtown Commercial Historic District is 35 mph.
- Owners of dilapidated, deteriorating buildings have no incentive to fix them up.
- There is no organized downtown merchants' association.

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- The ESRI Retail leakage report shows little need for expansion of existing businesses or for attracting new businesses as there is a surplus in almost every category on the report—assuming that only residents within a 5-mile radius support the Wallace businesses.
- The concept of “destination development” is to focus on providing a complete experience that includes something to see, something to do, something to buy, something to eat and somewhere to stay. This type of visit generates more spending. Currently there is an inadequate number and variety of shops in the historic downtown retail area to develop Wallace as a “destination.”
- There is no readily available inventory of commercial buildings for sale or for lease.
- The effort to revitalize Wallace’s business areas lacks an identifiable champion.

Positive Attributes

So what does Wallace have going for it?

- Longtime Wallace residents remember the downtown Commercial Historic District with great fondness. They love Wallace.
- Abundance of available commercial space.
- The town has four influential groups sincerely interested in improving the town’s business climate.
- The town is willing to commit resources to address the roadblocks to success.
- The downtown Commercial Historic District is quaint and has potential.
- In 1995 the downtown Commercial Historic District was officially entered by the US Department of Interior on the National Historic Register due to its local significance.
- Some improvements have already been made in the downtown area (e.g. clock square, Depot, James R. Sykes Park at the corner of Main and Railroad Streets).
- The renovated Depot and park area by the tracks are attractive gathering areas for events.
- The Town of Wallace has a desirable fire rating.
- The Town of Wallace has adequate water and wastewater capacity.
- Wallace allows liquor to be sold by the glass.
- Nearby River Landing residents are fairly affluent.
- The Tin City retail area attracts buyers from outside the area.
- The Stockyard Flea Market attracts buyers from outside the area.
- The town has a general aviation airport—Henderson Field. It has one runway.
- NCDOT will be repaving Highway 41 this summer.
- The town is in the process of creating a Unified Development Ordinance.

Belief that Wallace can rebound from its present situation and from the present economic downturn is essential. “If you can imagine it, you can achieve it; if you can dream it, you can become it” (William Arthur Ward). What is necessary is a shared image of what Wallace could become. This plan is an attempt to help create that vision.

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Geographic Boundaries

For the downtown Commercial Historic District: For the purpose of this study the boundaries of the district includes: North/South Raleigh Street, East/West Southerland Street, North/South College Street, and East/West Boney Street. It also includes the Depot property. The premier location will be businesses located on West Main Street (Highway 41) between NW/SW Railroad Street and North/South Raleigh Street.

For the Highway 117 Corridor: For the purpose of this study the Highway 117 corridor is both sides of Highway 117 (aka N. Norwood Street) between East Main Street and Stallings Road and it includes shopping centers which are recessed from the highway.

Factors of Economic Revitalization

The Main Street Program identifies six factors that need to be addressed in revitalizing historic downtown areas and they also apply to the Highway 117 corridor. These factors include:

1. Market conditions and business climate
Information such as area demographics, retail sales, retail leakage study, occupancies and rental information is included in this factor.
2. Retail mix
Citizen surveys, business owner surveys, and the retail leakage study will provide information as to the retail mix.
3. Real estate availability and condition
This information is needed to recruit businesses. When buildings and rentals are overpriced and/or are in poor condition, it will be more difficult to revitalize the area.
4. Physical environment and amenities
Even the best of businesses will not be successful if the surround area is run down and if the immediate area has no amenities.
5. Availability of capital/financing
Without capital and/or financing, buildings cannot be purchased or renovated and businesses cannot open or expand.
6. Business and development assistance
One of the most important services that can be offered to potential investors and to businesses willing to locate in the downtown Commercial Historic District and the Highway 117 corridor is complete and factual information. Professional business and development assistance can go a long way toward making the decision to locate or expand a business in Wallace.

Financing

Funding will be needed to renovate/repair existing structures in both the downtown Commercial Historic District as well as the Highway 117 Corridor. While there are some funding sources that would work for either area, funding for historic structures would be limited to the downtown Commercial Historic District buildings. Financing tools for renovation and businesses include:

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Public Funds

- Federal and State Tax Credits for historic building renovations
- Revolving Loan Funds—Duplin County
- Small Business Administration Funds
- Local governments—façade grants

Foundations

- NC Rural Economic Development Center
 - Building Reuse Grant (vacant properties)
 - NC Fund of Funds—venture capital and angel funds
- Golden Leaf
 - Economic Catalyst Grants

Private

- Owner equity
- Banks
- Bank loan pool
- Credit Unions
- Individuals/Angel investors
- Loan Pools/Loan Participation
- Donations/Gift Sales (to municipality or a nonprofit entity)
- Larger project into smaller pieces—create condominiums
- Rent grants
- Microenterprise loan funds
- Crowd Funding
- Sweat equity.

A community development corporation (CDC) or a 501(c) 3 redevelopment/revitalization organization is in a position to purchase, renovate and sell buildings. These types of entities are able to structure deals others may be unwilling or unable to do so.

Municipal Service Districts are useful tools to fund improvements. Bond referendums can produce funding for needed infrastructure (lighting, WiFi, water, sewer, parking). The USDA has loan and grant funds for rural government facilities and businesses.

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SWOT Analysis

At the initial meeting with the community leaders, those in attendance were asked to write one word comments of how they viewed the Highway 117 commercial corridor and how they viewed the downtown Commercial Historic District. The responses were as follows:

- Highway 117 Commercial Corridor—90% negative. Descriptors included: blight, dreary, depressing, despair, cold, unwelcoming.
- Downtown Commercial Historic District—40% Positive, 60% negative. Positive descriptors included: historic, nostalgic, home, memories, and potential. Negative descriptors included: vacant, empty, outdated, dead.

Clearly those who completed the exercise felt more connected to the downtown area than to the Highway 117 area.

Those attending were also asked what assistance they were willing to offer to help turn these negatives into positives. Here are those responses:

1. Committee work
2. Construction advice
3. Convince others to participate
4. Landscape/planner
5. Time and planning work to design storefronts
6. Suggestions, forethought
7. Not sure
8. Investment, organization, support downtown businesses
9. Time, effort and energy as the need presents itself
10. Help “sell” the town, willing to serve on committees
11. Willing to volunteer my efforts to market buildings
12. Clean-up
13. Brainstorming, creativity, ideas from out-of-town
14. Willing to work on planning committees
15. Paint, plant, install pavers
16. Work, time, effort
17. Committee work, secretarial work, telephone time
18. Recruit businesses, promote town online and in print
19. Time and energy, knowledge & experience with extreme desire
20. Support effort with enthusiasm—be a cheerleader
21. Work with faith community
22. Committee work
23. Ideas for stores

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The town leaders generated a list of Strengths for the downtown Commercial Historic District. The prioritized list included:

- Restored depot
- Fair rents
- Proximity to I-40
- People who love Wallace
- Vegetation—trees—soften landscape
- Location/location/location
- Leadership—regional—retail hub
- Growing population
- Large number of historic buildings
- Ongoing festivals
- Progressive town governance
- More services than other towns of its size
- This has been done before—experience
- Homes and churches around the historic downtown area are well maintained
- Purchases of existing buildings
- Historic plaques on buildings
- Clean streets
- Large number of organizations and events
- Diversity
- Former residents return for events
- Proximity to Duplin Winery
- Excess water & sewer capacity
- Fire rating
- Stronger than competition
- Walmart
- People care

The weaknesses were prioritized for the downtown and they included:

- Too many vacant building
- Heavy truck traffic through the historic business district
- Lack of master plan
- Core group getting tired—others not stepping up
- No niche—no drawing card
- Lack of organized effort and incentives to fill vacancies
- Lack of communication
- No plan to deal with burned out building
- Need better exterior lighting
- No joint ads or marketing for downtown merchants
- Too many people shop elsewhere

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No downtown merchant association to pool assets (Downtown Wallace as a village)

Parking—presently parallel—diagonal may work better

Lack of customer friendly hours

No use of public transportation that serves area

Weak building ordinances

Lack of involvement of young people

Don't know what people want to see downtown

Duplicate competition

Lack of town staff to plan and manage

Need to enforce the sign codes

Don't know what people want downtown

Town should consider investing in vacant properties and holding them

No wayfinding signage

Prioritized opportunities for the downtown area included:

Owners could create inviting storefront—even vacant buildings—by staging (no viewing of warehoused items through windows)

Make downtown a destination

Form a downtown merchant's association

Look for a niche—antiques?

Name brand coffee shop

Vacant buildings

Mix of retail/service

Improve physical standards

Work with existing owners to tidy up retail stores and remove tacky looking posters from windows

Move town hall downtown

Underground electric, phone & cable

Rebuild the theater (Danca)

Outside grants

Historic markers for I-40

Strawberry Festival—social center

Create adequate parking

Tin city generates traffic

Wayfinding signage

Fair rental rates

Commercial kitchens

Promote uniqueness

Wallace is a regional retail hub

Provide ideas to owners of vacant buildings

Create artist spaces—small shared space—work with Arts & Craft Guild—build on that

Study what other towns have done

Create a tax district

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Involvement of minority business owners
Bluegrass (pickin' and grinnin') at the depot
Dog-leg of Hwy. 41 in downtown area
Buildings structurally look good
Increase in downtown foot traffic from new court training facility
Some businesses are doing well
Investments
Light poles
Ice Cream parlor
Residential dwellings over stores
Center of Technology
Resources for owners

The threats noted for the downtown area included:

Decline in the economy
Deteriorating buildings and lack of capital to fix them
Negative image—buildings look abandoned
Lack of foot traffic
Not extending the railroad tracks south between Wallace and Castle Hayne
Lack of a shared vision
Lack of grand entrance (seduce people to come downtown from Tin City/interstate)
Poor communication
Aging property owners—decreased interests in fixing properties up
Economy in general is depressed
Perception by business owners that moving to Tin City will increase business
Lack of variety
Apathy
Downtown store hours are erratic
Lack of conformity to sign ordinance
Increase cost of building repairs
I-40 Walmart
Stores are closed at night
Competition for grants
Increase in homeless population—hang out downtown
Increased crime
Decrease in capital investment (public and private)
New shopping area—Tin City
Absentee owners
Sprawl

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The town leaders generated a list of Strengths for Highway 117 Commercial Corridor. The prioritized list included:

- Hwy 117 is still a main artery
- Available Buildings
- Active community organizations interested in the economic development of the town
- Good traffic pattern
- Plenty of parking
- Large auto dealership--only one selling new cars in Duplin County
- Traffic count is stable
- Lots of places to eat
- Flea Market popularity
- Festivals to draw crowds to the area
- Opportunities
- Some businesses on the corridor are doing well
- Visibility
- Sidewalks (some)
- Some historic buildings
- New buildings and some under construction
- New business starts

The prioritized weaknesses noted for the Highway 117 Corridor included:

- Vacant buildings--especially the three shopping centers
- Not a "destination"
- Some properties are still under long leases--no incentive for owners to do anything with the buildings
- Run-down buildings
- Poor image to a visitor seeing the town for the first time
- Absentee owners hard to get hold of
- Trailers being dropped/parked in parking lots of vacant buildings
- Hodge-podge of building types (metal mixed with older brick, new/old, rundown residential mixed with commercial)
- unsightly signs--need sign ordinance
- Tractor trailers blocking line of sight to roads
- Lack of landscaping

The prioritized opportunities for the Highway 117 Corridor included:

- Complete a marketing plan--attempt to get owners to reinvest
- Offer tax credits
- Historically was a regional shopping area
- Big buildings (boxes) need to be divided
- Diverse uses

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Offices for large companies that have a presence in the area

Signage

MLS listings of available property on the corridor

Straight shot to I-40 (40 mph through town)

Variety of rental rates

The prioritized list of threats for the Highway 117 Corridor included:

Businesses want to locate near Tin City (Walmart)

Absentee owners won't communicate or respond to contact

Abandonment of buildings

Additional decay of properties along corridor

General economy

Lack of ordinances/zoning

Owners refuting reassessment of property values--decrease in value means a decrease in taxes

Decrease in population

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General Recommendations

Recommendation One: *Review and follow the guide “Organizing a Successful Downtown Revitalization Program Using the Main Street Approach.”*

A copy of this document is provided in the Appendix. It provides specific examples and detailed steps for implementation. Another excellent resource is the website Downtown and Business District Market Analysis: Tools to Create Economically Vibrant Commercial Districts in Small Cities <http://fyi.uwex.edu/downtown-market-analysis/>.

Recommendation Two: *Hire a Planner/Economic Developer/Community Developer for the town.*

The revitalization of the downtown Commercial Historic District and the redevelopment of the Highway 117 corridor is a long term strategy. It may take 20 or more years to make significant strides. It will require a concerted effort and can rarely be done without the hands-on guidance of a paid professional. The Town Manager is already overwhelmed with his current responsibilities and does not have the time to devote to shepherding the implementation of this plan. Someone needs to coordinate the effort of the various concerned entities. This individual can have a number of related responsibilities (e.g., code enforcement on the corridor and in the downtown Commercial Historic District; etc.). The town has budgeted for this position to be filled in FY12-13. It is imperative that this individual study this report and become familiar with financing tools. It is suggested that he or she visit towns that have been successful in renovating their downtowns (e.g. New Bern, Burlington) and meet with those who were involved in the effort. He or she should also attend meetings, workshops and conferences where downtown revitalization projects are presented. He or she should also develop an inventory of commercial buildings in the town which includes basic information on each one. A sample data collection tool is located in the Appendix. It is preferable that the data base be created in Access so that various reports can be produced. This individual should also develop a general marketing brochure for the town.

Recommendation Three: *Ensure that the town has and rigorously enforces an ordinance that addresses substandard/dilapidated commercial structures.*

These structures are eye-sores and are detrimental to attracting businesses, industry and new residents. Monitoring and dealing with these issues could be part of the duties of the town’s new Economic/Community Developer. This would allow him or her to get intimately acquainted with owners of commercial property. He or she should become familiar with the NC Rehab Code: <http://www.ncrehabcode.com/> . There is an excellent decision tree for the code that can help decide what applies to the rehab project: <http://www.ncrehabcode.com/pdf/decision.pdf> .

Recommendation Four: *Develop a wayfinding sign system for the town.*

Signs announcing the arrival in the Town of Wallace should be consistent and should be coordinated with the theme chosen. A unified wayfinding sign system will attract drivers into the downtown area and will help those seeking to locate the business district. It will direct visitors to parking areas and

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point the way to various points of interest. Wayfinding systems address three types of trips: “to,” “through,” and “around.” Using the railroad theme for signage would create a consistent look.

Recommendation Five: *Attract seniors to relocate to Wallace*

It helps to think of each newly migrated retiree as representing a new “job.” They bring money into the community—the same as a job. This money is from social security, pensions and investments. Just like an employer, they pay taxes—sales taxes, personal property taxes and real estate taxes (if they own property). They also help stimulate the economy by the spending they do in the community.

Here is an example of an incentive being offered to attract seniors. For a limited time period, the City of Cambridge, MD offered a special retiree tax break to those households headed by an individual age 60 or older moving on a full-time basis to the city and purchasing a residence for owner-occupancy. The eligible individuals would receive fifty percent (50%) reduction in their real estate tax obligation over the course of three years. An incentive such as this would accelerate increasing the tax base and would help support the revitalization of the downtown Commercial Historic District.

Recommendation Six: *Encourage town residents, realtors, and commercial building owners to help recruit the specific business that they would like to see locate in town.*

Provide business cards or post cards that are slick and provide contact information. Ask town residents, realtors and commercial building owners to distribute these when they go on trips and see a business that would be a good fit in Wallace (one that they would support). They should suggest to the owner that a business like his or hers is needed and would prosper in Wallace, NC.

Recommendation Seven: *Every vacant building and storefront should have sign or box for flyers with sale/lease information.*

Nothing is more frustrating to a potential buyer or potential lessee than not being able to conveniently find details (or at least contact information) on a building or space in which they may have an interest. If town staff notices a building without this information, they should notify the building owner. If there is a merchants’ association in place, they could perform this task. It is in everyone’s best interest to get these vacancies occupied as quickly as possible.

Recommendation Eight: *Develop a database of commercial buildings in the Downtown Commercial Historic District and the Highway 117 corridor.*

The Access Database should minimally include: square feet, address, square foot price, for sale/lease (per month)/terms, contact company, contact name & phone, present use, last use, pertinent details. This task could be assigned to the new Economic/Community Developer. The National Register of Historic Places has some information on buildings in the downtown Commercial Historic District—a starting point.

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Recommendation Nine: *Create a new website for Wallace that addresses economic development.*

Make it easy for prospective buyers/lessees to find information not only about available spaces, but also for how to do business in Wallace. Links should be provided to the Committee of 100, Chamber of Commerce, Duplin EDC, Wallace Revitalization Association (if it develops a website) and the Town of Wallace. The website must be kept current. Have sections for “entrepreneurs” and “small business start-up.” Include testimonials. Place a “click here for contact” on every web page. Clayton, MO is an excellent example of a municipal economic development website:

http://www.claytonmo.gov/Business/Economic_Development.htm Here is another example from Clayton, NC: <http://downtownclayton.org/>

Recommendation Ten: *Encourage the development of additional amenities and attractions in and near Wallace that would interest visitors.*

The Boney Mill Pond is an example of an area that would make a lovely public park. Creating a cane pole fishing area there for children might entice families from nearby urban areas to come to Wallace for a day trip. Working with the Duplin County Tourism Development Authority, the town could package tourism assets in the surrounding counties to create a day-trip or multi-day destination. Market the availability of these trips to groups in urban centers that are 2 or 3 hours away. These trips can also be posted on the NC Eastern Region’s Tourism website.

Recommendation Eleven: *Institute a community branding program.*

Create a theme for the town by using a tag line. Ideas include: “Wallace—a Railroad Runs Through It” or “Wallace—Riding the Rails of Progress.” Use a railroad theme for the downtown. Since the history of the town is so heavily vested in the railroad and since the town banners have a train engine on it, a railroad theme seems logical and consistent. Use this theme on everything related to the town—business cards, stationery, signs, webpages, etc. Consider hiring a branding company to create the graphics. They do not need to do the associated study if a theme is already selected. One example of a company that has worked with NC STEP communities is Arnett Muldrow & Associates.

<http://arnettmuldrow.com/branding.html>

Recommendation Twelve: *Institute a “buy local” campaign.*

A simple, straightforward campaign is easy and can produce results. To learn how to do it, consult “Shop Local Campaigns for Small Towns” at <http://files.mccrayandassoc.com/downloads/shoplocal.pdf>.

Recommendation Thirteen: *Revise estimates of catchment area for Wallace*

The Town of Wallace’s website and the website for the Committee of 100 state that there is “an estimated 50,000 people in a surrounding three county area.” The message does not provide details on what “three county area” is being referenced. It would be more accurate to state that within a 10-mile radius of the municipal boundaries of the Town of Wallace there are 21,146 people and 9,490 households (Census 2010).

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Recommendation Fourteen: *Continue to seek assistance in implementing revitalization projects.*

The Town of Wallace should continue to apply to both the NC Small Town Main Street Program and the NC Rural Center's Small Town Economic Prosperity program until accepted. The town should also join the NC Downtown Development Association.

Recommendation Fifteen: *Continue existing Festivals and consider additional ones.*

Festivals are an excellent economic development tool in that they bring people to Wallace who may never have actually visited it before. These visitors spend money in town and get exposed to its charm and residents. It is important that annual Festivals (like the Carolina Strawberry Festival) be continued, however, small changes should be made each year to keep it fresh for returning patrons.

Recommendation Sixteen: *Merchants should work together to encourage shoppers from out of town to visit other area shops and to participate in upcoming community events.*

In the fall this researcher visited the town of Edenton and shopped in a large store that housed three distinct retailers—a hardware store, an electronics store, and a gift shop. The gift store made sure patrons left with brochures on the upcoming Christmas festival and information about other downtown merchants. This is an excellent example of how merchants can work together to create synergy and to help promote town events.

Recommendation Seventeen: *Improve communication and organize an internal marketing program.*

Develop a weekly e-newsletter to keep local citizens informed of what is going on in town. List events, name stores that have opened, list stores that have expanded, spotlight merchants, promote events and special sales, etc.

Recommendation Eighteen: *Strive for visible impacts initially.*

In order for citizens to believe that something is really changing, they need to see it. Paint it, decorate it, clean it, fix it, and/or repurpose it. Get the newspaper to run pictures of improvements.

Recommendation Nineteen: *Keep records and produce reports.*

Recordkeeping is important to revitalization efforts. Track: accomplishments, spending, investments, jobs saved/created, in-kind contributions, volunteers, volunteer hours, new businesses openings, expansions, renovations, etc. Report these periodically to the Town Council and to the Community. They may be needed to apply for grants. And take lots of photos (especially before/after shots)—keep a scrapbook of them along with newspaper clippings.

Recommendation Twenty: *Celebrate accomplishments.*

It is hard to keep momentum going so it is important to remember to celebrate accomplishments—even the small ones. If you don't pat yourself on the back once in a while, you may lose faith and interest.

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Downtown Commercial Historic District Recommendations

For downtown the following recommendations apply regardless of the type of businesses that locate there. Given the area demographics and the findings of the ESRI Retail Leakage report, it is doubtful that residents in a 5-mile radius will be able to fully support businesses in the downtown therefore it is imperative the shoppers from outside the area be attracted to support the merchants. There are two possible target populations that could be sought. Depending on which one is chosen, the types of businesses and marketing techniques will be dramatically different. It would behoove the Town to carefully weigh these options and decide which direction it wants to go. The two options are discussed below.

Option one: Target market is older adults (60+)

Given the graying of the population, this option may have merit. The downtown businesses would be a mix of restaurants, boutiques, and shops catering to the type of food and products purchased by that demographic. The downtown would take on a look like New Bern. The competition for this clientele would be fierce and the town would have to find some niche that would attract these people to shop the downtown Commercial Historic District of Wallace. One way would be to partner with nearby towns and venues to put together “packages” of one, two and three day tours. The town would then work with tour companies, Parks & Recreation departments, churches and larger retiree communities to have them bus these visitors to the area. One drawing card is the Duplin Winery.

The retail shops would sell art, clothes, shoes, accessories, jewelry, wine & cheese, antiques, coins/stamps, high end toys (for grandchildren), bath & beauty products, coffee shop, ice cream shop, unique hand-made items, spas, and value-added farm products.

Option two: Target market is teens and young adults (16 to 30)

Other than chain stores at a mall, there is no real shopping mecca specifically designed to attract teens and young people. The mix would be very different from the one above. There would need to be several trendy, themed restaurants catering to the palates of these young people. There would be a health food store/juice bar, a yogurt store, a store selling vintage and unusual clothing, a high-fashion accessory shop, shop selling monogrammed items, spas, tanning salon, high fashion hair salon, high fashion nail parlor, tattoo parlor, video arcade, drop-in child care facility, Starbucks coffee shop, Wii exercise/drop in yoga rooms, wedding/prom/special occasion dress shop (could be consignment), high fashion shoe store, and a theater for performances.

The area would be dog friendly. Over the shops might be a youth hostel for those singles who want to spend the night. The look of the buildings and windows would need to be unique and upscale. The concept would attract young entrepreneurs to the town. The downtown Commercial Historic District would need to be carefully marketed and positioned. Social media would be heavily utilized in promoting the downtown Commercial Historic District.

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Those ages 31 to 59 will mostly be traditional shoppers and while they might occasionally shop downtown, the bulk of their spending will be done at more traditional stores, discount stores or online.

Two additional players may contribute to the success of a downtown area. Office and residential uses along with retail create a mixed use that generates the synergy needed to revitalize a downtown area. Creating condominiums in second stories over first-floor retail is highly desirable. Employees of downtown offices may dine and shop in the Commercial Historic District over their lunchtime and before they leave for home.

Recommendation One: *Conduct a citizen shopping survey for the downtown Commercial Historic District.*

It is important to know citizen shopping preferences and habits when trying to make decision of the mix of retail needed/desired for the town. These surveys might ask questions like: Do you currently shop in Wallace? How often do you shop in the downtown Commercial Historic District? What is the primary reason you visit Wallace's downtown Commercial Historic District? How far away do you live from Wallace's downtown Commercial Historic District? How do you find out about local businesses, shopping, sales, and promotions in Wallace's downtown Commercial Historic District? Be sure to survey the River Landing community. These responses should provide useful information for making decisions. A sample survey is included in the Appendix.

Recommendation Two: *Conduct a survey of retail businesses owners who have shops in the downtown Commercial Historic District.*

Merchant surveys can provide some important information as to the health of these businesses. You may also ask questions like what other businesses would they like to see locate in the district. One important analysis will be the sales to rent ratio. Main Street staff recommends that retail sales per square foot should be around \$100/sf to be a successful, healthy business. Rent that is too high for the marketplace can put good businesses out of business as can sales that are too low. The merchant who thoughtfully completes this analysis and finds an imbalance can do two things to improve it: 1) talk to the building owner about a reduction in rent and/or 2) find ways to increase sales (number or profitability). Another possibility if permitted by the lease would be to sublet a portion of the space to another compatible business. A sample survey is included in the Appendix.

Recommendation Three: *Create an entrepreneurial program specifically focused on increasing the number of retail and restaurant businesses to be located in downtown. Form an "incubator without walls" to provide support and technical assistance.*

"One of the biggest problems faced by traditional commercial district revitalization efforts is a list of 'qualified' entrepreneurs, people who are able to open a retail or restaurant business almost immediately, in response to a newly vacant retail space...Downtown should be positioned as the number one place to find or start independent, unique, and entrepreneurial retail, restaurant and support businesses." <http://www.cambridgemainstreet.com/uploads/file/MarketAnalysisfinalsept09.pdf>

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In association with the Duplin County School System, the Duplin County Economic Development Department and the Small Business Center at James Sprunt Community College, partner to create an entrepreneurial program specifically focused on growing retail and restaurant businesses to be located in downtown. The program could “pre-qualify” entrepreneurs to occupy vacant buildings in the downtown Commercial Historic District.

Form an “incubator without walls” to provide support and technical assistance. Once an entrepreneur has “graduated” from an entrepreneurial program, he or she will need continued support for 12 to 24 months after he or she opens his or her business. This continued assistance is only available to those who occupy space in the downtown Commercial Historic District.

Recommendation Four: *Create a pleasing downtown environment so that visitors will want to linger, shop, eat and return.*

Women conduct upwards of 80% of most retail transactions. To be successful, commercial districts must be attractive to women. What women want are clean, well-stocked stores; variety; streetscapes; pleasing buildings; adequate lighting; close and convenient parking; restrooms; and the perception of a safe physical environment.

Downtowns capture sales primarily through full service restaurants, specialty shops and boutiques. Restaurants are the key anchors for traditional commercial districts. People don’t purchase goods every day, but they do eat every day. Visitors will linger longer if they have a nice place to refresh themselves. A variety of independently owned/ chef-driven restaurants is needed for a vibrant downtown.

According to one study, communities should employ a five-point framework for planning use mix within a central business district. These include: a mix of uses; type and price point of retail goods and services; customer origin; customer demographics; and daypart planning.

Mix of uses includes: retail, restaurants, and consumer services; arts, attractions and entertainment; accommodations and meeting facilities; civic; office/commercial; production /distribution/repair; and housing.

The type of good and services sold in the district along with their prices need to be considered. A downtown cannot compete with Walmart on price. What would be compatible with existing and desired businesses?

Where will your customer originate from? Will they be local or out of the area? If out of the area, will you attract them from surrounding communities or will you attract them from micropolitan or metro areas? The goods and services will vary with each group.

Customer demographics are another factor to consider. Does the town desire to attract youth, families, middle age or elderly customers? The type of goods and service that will attract each of these categories will differ. Which group has the disposable income?

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Daypart planning refers to programming specific blocks of time during the day. For example in the hospitality field, these periods are segregated into periods around breakfast, lunch, happy hour and dinner. This planning is done in response to market demand and customer preferences. It is desirable to extend the hours of activity in the downtown area so that it is more than just “9 to 5” “Monday through Saturday.” Residents have complained that there are no extended hours for businesses in the downtown district and that the hours are not consistent from business to business. Planning around different times of the day to meet the needs of the customers includes planning the retail and attraction mix to maximize patronage of the downtown Commercial Historic District throughout the day and into the evening. In many communities it begins with a once a month event held on a Friday evening. New Bern, NC holds “Art Walk.” Jacksonville, NC holds “Alive at Five.”

“Small retailers now compete for customers with larger stores in regional trade areas and with direct selling firms (online and catalog). They must respond both individually and collectively to remain competitive. A viable retail sector can improve a community’s ability to attract new employers and residents (Kean et al. 1998). Strategic innovation, promotions, and improved levels of service are necessary to attract shoppers from outside the community and reduce a community’s retail leakage. Consumer attitudes about local retailers are a greater determinant of outshopping behavior than demographics, lifestyle, or socioeconomic attitudes (Hozier and Stem 1985). Streetscape trees shape retail attitudes and, in turn, may influence behaviors of both nearby shoppers and potential visitors. Although the processes of collaborative economic improvement are complex and require long-term commitment, urban forest planning and management can be an important component of district improvements.” http://www.naturewithin.info/CityBiz/BizSmlTn3Ps_JFor.pdf

“Small town and rural retailers need to focus on enhancing their attractiveness to local and regional consumers in ways that allow it to overcome any accessibility challenges they might have...They are able to increase their competitiveness by focusing on their capabilities and their customers in ways that help them to avoid direct competition.” http://www.ruralgrocery.org/research/Rural_Consumers.pdf

Define the downtown by placing arches over Main Street (Highway 41). Place one at the College Street intersection and one at the Raleigh Street intersection. The arch should be decorative and should reflect a theme. If you use a railroad theme, the arch could have a railroad engine and cars running over the top of it.

Develop a phased plan to eliminate the overhead electric, phone and cable wires on Main Street between College Street and Raleigh Street. Either bury them or move them to a parallel street (Southerland Street and Boney Street).

Use decorative street lights that complement the theme chosen on both sides of Main Street and on one side of College Street, Boney Street, Raleigh Street and Southerland Street.

Create a decorative plaque on which to put the street numbers for the various stores located on the rectangle that encompasses the area bordered by College Street, Boney Street, Raleigh Street and Southerland Street. These plaques should also reflect a theme. If you used a railroad theme, the plaque could be the same style as the arch—paint it black and put the numbers in white.

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Use decorative benches, trees, plantings, planters and sandwich board signs to soften the street. <http://www.displays2go.com/Category.aspx?ID=2257> The sandwich board signs could have a railroad engine and cars across the top (same style as the arch). Planter boxes could be in the shape of an engine or could have a train painted on it.

Sidewalks should be smooth and free of hazards such as buckled concrete. There are machines which can be used to smooth the sidewalks (grinding). Here is a link to an article that discusses how to refurbish sidewalks: http://www.ehow.com/how_6396900_resurface-concrete-sidewalk.html The Town could paint parallel gray tracks on the sidewalk in the defined shopping area to replicate a train track.

If possible create interior parking in the area bounded by W Main Street, NE Railroad Street, W Southerland Street and N Raleigh Street. Create interior walkways in the area bounded by W Main Street, SW Railroad Street, W Boney Street and S Raleigh Street. The way the buildings are laid out in this block has potential to create an interesting grouping of stores. Pleasant walks could be created throughout the block winding among the shops. The area could be decorated using plantings, art sculptures and interesting exteriors on the buildings.

Have murals painted on buildings that about the interior walkways or that have an exterior wall that can be viewed from the defined shopping district. Use a railroad theme or picture that is consistent with the history of Wallace.

Build a kiosk (railroad theme look) in a central area (clock) where you can post directional signs, post event signs and distribute brochures.

Have one or more public restrooms in the downtown area. An alternative would be to pay businesses to open their restrooms up to the public. It is uninviting to visitors to see “no public restroom” signs posted in windows of downtown businesses especially during events. As the population continues to age, more accessibility to restrooms will be needed.

Have parking on the periphery of the shopping district. Visitors should not have to walk more than one block to get to the shopping district. The town should lease or purchase land for parking. Parking areas should be every bit as attractive as the downtown. The Town could put a picket fence around the parking area with a wooden train attached to it.

Allow businesses in the business district to use the sidewalks as an extension of the business—for display of merchandise (retail sales) or for the placement of small tables and chairs (restaurant). Allow restaurants to serve beer, wine and liquor by the drink to those who sit at these tables.

Ensure that the town’s ordinances are compatible with these concepts.

Use vacant storefronts for displays that encourage visitors to frequent downtown merchants or that promote the town in some way. A painter’s drop cloth could be hung a short distance behind the window to screen out the vacant store or to screen out unsightly interiors. An alternative would be to display children’s art on the windows of the vacant storefronts. This art could be themed according to

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the season. It should be kept fresh looking. Displaying children's artwork will bring parents to the downtown area to view the display.

Recommendation Five: *Work with NC DOT to either divert or mitigate truck traffic on Highway 41 through the Downtown Commercial Historic District.*

The public complains that there is too much truck traffic through the heart of the downtown Commercial Historic District. NC DOT has designated Highway 41 (Main Street) as a "truck route" by the NC DOT. Trucks have been observed using excessive speed. The speed limit through this area is 35 miles per hour. Some want the speed reduced to 25 miles per hour, however, a Federal Highway Administration report indicates that this is ineffective in reducing speed. One of the more effective means to reduce speed is to install speed feedback signs. The study also make the point that if a community does install traffic-calming devices, they need to be prepared to properly maintain them. <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/08067/>

Trucks observed on this road include those transporting chickens, turkeys and hogs. The smell wafts through the air for several minutes after the truck has actually passed by. When a town is trying to revitalize its downtown Commercial Historic District, this odor is detrimental. Trees planted on Main Street would help to absorb odors somewhat and help to reduce the noise (3 to 5 decibels). An additional benefit is that trees help to slow traffic. "Studies show that the more trees and landscaping a business district has, the more business will flow in. A tree-lined street will also slow traffic – enough to allow the drivers to look at the store fronts instead of whizzing by." <http://www.treepeople.org/top-22-benefits-trees>

The town should consider pressing NCDOT to move forward with the planned Comprehensive Transportation Study for the Town of Wallace. This study will provide insight into the issues and make recommendations. The town should ensure that the plan addresses Highway 41 through the downtown Commercial Historic District. There is also a concern regarding the railroad tracks at Southerland Street—apparently vehicles have gotten hung up there due to the height of the pavement over the tracks.

Recommendation Six: *Provide incentives to owners of property in the Downtown Commercial Historic District to fix up their buildings.*

Provide substantial tax breaks for new downtown construction or significant rehabilitation. An example would be to allow the developer to pay only one-fifth of their increase municipal tax obligation (increases in property values due to improvements only) in year one, two-fifths in year two, three-fifths in year three, and four-fifths in year four. The town should also consider a reduction in impact fees. Another option would be a façade grant program coordinated by the town of by a Downtown Merchant's Association. Historic tax credits are also available to assist owners in improving the buildings.

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Recommendation Seven: *Provide incentives to entrepreneurs to locate their businesses in the Downtown Commercial Historic District.*

Building owners could give the new tenant a break on the rent if the tenant improves the interior of the building and/or façade. This reduction in rent could be over three years with the most being in the first year. The owner could offer a bonus if the tenant stays the full three years of the lease and then signs a new lease for additional time (or gives a credit toward more building improvements). This vests the tenant in keeping up the space.

Recommendation Eight: *Increase the usage and vitality of the Depot.*

The Depot is an attractive example of adaptive reuse of a building. Currently it houses the Wallace Chamber of Commerce and a small museum of local artifacts. The building contains a small conference room, two sets of restrooms, one kitchen area, one concession stand, one retail space that used to be an art gallery, one enclosed gathering space and one large covered outdoor space. There is a large covered porch/walkway on the railroad track side of the building. This has a few benches.

Some of the interior has materials that are not in harmony with the rustic look of the rest of the building. It would be better if the whole interior looked consistent (rustic).

The Depot has two rail cars: a caboose and a mail car. Once these are remodeled and put on a siding, they will be assets to attract visitors. Currently the mail car is in very rough condition inside and out. The caboose is in better condition. When one views the Depot from the road, the first thing that is seen is the dilapidated railway mail car. This detracts from the work done on the Depot. The town should work to secure the funding needed to make improvements to the mail car, beginning with the exterior. Moving the mail car to a less prominent location on the site is also suggested.

The Depot was once home to a Farmers' Market, but is no longer. A Farmers' Market would be a fit with the uses of this building. A lot of planning would need to go into bringing this back and there is competition with the Stockyard. There are USDA grants to develop and market Farmers' Markets. Wallace should consider applying for these funds if the town desires to develop a Farmers' Market at the Depot.

The Depot has been the center of activity for festivals like the Carolina Strawberry Festival which is held in May of each year. This is an appropriate use of the facility.

The Depot is rarely rented out. There is some potential for income if the facility could be rented for parties and meetings. The chairs and tables are worn according to the Chamber of Commerce Executive Director and should be replaced.

Also, if there were clear vinyl drapes that could be lowered during inclement or cold weather, the covered deck could be used more.

The Depot could be used as a gathering spot to attract people to downtown. The Depot could be the site of Friday night or Saturday gospel sing, community sing, skits or performances by informal music

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groups. Church groups could sell food and drinks. Musical or dancing competitions could be held there. These gatherings could be styled after the early rural Chautauqua. <http://sdrclib.uiowa.edu/traveling-culture/essay.htm/>. Try it and see how it evolves. The Chamber of Commerce or the Wallace Revitalization Association could develop and manage these events. The Depot is a wonderful asset and it should be more fully utilized to the benefit of the merchants.

Recommendation Nine: *Relocate the Town Hall to the downtown area*

It is easier to ensure continued focus on the downtown area if the Town Hall were to be located in the downtown Commercial Historic District. Commissioners, staff and visitors to Town Hall would be in the district daily. They would be more likely to shop and eat in the district if it were in close proximity. Just having more people walking in the downtown would give the impression of prosperity. This recommendation came up a number of times in the SWOT analysis.

Recommendation Ten: *Ensure adequate parking*

Nothing is more aggravating to a visitor than to have a problem finding a parking space. If it is too difficult to find one, then in all likelihood they will take their business elsewhere. Not only that, they will remember their poor experience and tell others about it. If time and energy is going to be spent revitalizing the downtown, then the town must plan for adequate nearby parking. The parking must also be attractive and feel safe to the visitor.

Ineffective signage can make it difficult for patrons to find off-street parking areas. Employees occupying prime spaces can reduce the number of choice spots for patrons. Potential customers who cannot find convenient parking will probably take their business elsewhere, especially if it happens more than once.

Churches in close proximity to the downtown Commercial Historic District could be approached about using their parking lots for public parking during the week and on Saturdays. While not a permanent answer to the need for additional parking, it can be a temporary fix until other arrangements can be made.

Recommendation Eleven: *Engage youth in downtown revitalization*

Work with the business club at the high school (or a similar class or club) to develop a small business that the group could run. Get one of the owners of an empty space to allow the group to use the space at no charge for a three or six month period. One of the downtown merchants could mentor the group.

The industrial arts class could help to design and build the planters. The agriculture/horticulture class could grow the plants for the containers. The art classes could decorate planters, fences, etc. If the youth had an investment in the downtown, they might start shopping there. Ask the youth what type of shops they would like to see in the downtown area.

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Recommendation Twelve: *Install and maintain a free Wi-Fi system in the downtown Commercial Historic District*

Offer free public outdoor Wi-Fi access on the areas bordered by Southerland Street, Raleigh Street, Boney Street and College Street. According to Computer World, cities and community development organizations across the country have embraced free Wi-Fi to boost economic development and attract visitors to downtown areas. Nice areas for sitting/relaxing would be needed to take advantage of the Wi-Fi system. USDA has broadband grants available for rural areas.

Recommendation Thirteen: *Conduct a “next great place” contest.*

The Burlington Downtown Corporation (BDC) conducted a Next Great Place contest. In step 1 of the contest the entrants (10) had to submit a You Tube Video telling about their business and why they wanted to win. Semi-finalists (6) were chosen and invited to submit business plans for review (step 2). In step 3, the three finalists went through interviews on and off the air. In step 4 the three finalists had to set up a mock storefront window display at a local festival and these were judged both by a panel and by the general public. The first place winner received (from the BDC) \$21,465 in rent/up-fit in a building owned by the BDC. The second place winner received \$15,465 in rent/up-fit and the third place winner got \$9,465 in rent/up-fits. All three received a one year membership in the Chamber of Commerce and Business Support Services. Would it be possible to get one or more building owners to provide free rent to the winners if Wallace were to conduct a similar contest? The intent of the contest is to get new tenants into the downtown buildings.

Recommendation Fourteen: *Create a Downtown Merchants’ Association*

“Nationally, one of the greatest challenges to forming any kind of management entity for a commercial district is recognizing the needs. While very few business owners would ever advocate the elimination of management from a mall environment, the same reasoning does not often carry over when downtown is the focus.” The business community needs to interpret downtown development as a business and needs to understand that businesses must have management. “Downtown programs do not often have the luxury of having a budget that will support the staff necessary to implement a program of work, thus the need for a heavy volunteer base. Very often, the volunteer base is already stretched thin. If the downtown program is going to be successful, ‘working volunteers’ will be needed to help keep the program on track.” The Downtown Merchants’ Association would help to market the shops in a cohesive way so that there would be a multiplier effect in advertising dollars. In Wallace’s situation, the new economic/community development director might be able to provide some support to get it started. <http://www.tehachapicityhall.com/DocumentCenter/Home/View/461>

While there may not be enough members to form committees, the following need to be addressed: 1) organization & community outreach (internal affairs, reaching out to community, fundraising, public relations, newsletters); 2) design & renovations (facades, buildings & streetscapes); 3) promotion (advertising, welcome packages, retail promotions, directional signage, etc.); and 4) economic assistance

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(produce reports, conduct surveys, employee training, business consultation/education, etc.). There are a number of examples given in the resource section of this document.

Recommendation Fifteen: *Create a Municipal Service Tax District*

The City of New Bern assesses a Municipal Service District (MSD) Tax on property located in the downtown area. This tax rate is \$0.12 per \$100 in value, in addition to the \$0.41 per \$100 in value rate. This additional tax is collected for the on-going revitalization of Downtown New Bern. Over the years, MSD monies funded 10 blocks of major streetscape improvements, trees, street furniture, several new parking lots and street banners. For additional information visit the following webpages:

http://www.newbern-nc.org/Fin/tx_rates.php <http://www.downtownnewbern.com/pages/projects-bear-plaza.htm> <http://www.newbern-nc.org/Fin/documents/MSD.pdf>

Recommendation Sixteen: *Utilize the Main Street Four Point Approach and Eight Guiding Principles*

The Main Street program has been successful throughout the United States in revitalizing rural downtown areas. These points and principles are tried and true and should be followed. For convenience, these are included in the Appendix.

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Highway 117 Corridor Recommendations

Recommendation One: *Encourage the redevelopment of the Rock Fish Plaza into a cluster of building related businesses and light industry serving that cluster.*

Businesses to target include: Habitat ReStore, home renovation, architectural supplies, architect & drafting services, landscape architects, nursery, home improvement warehouse (Lowes, Home Depot, Ace), Tractor Supply, lawn and garden equipment maintenance and sales, lighting, carpet, flooring, bedding, furniture, accessories, tile, raw furniture, paint, wallpaper, window treatments, appliances, remodeling services, roofing, lumber, statuary, DIY furniture, Harbor Freight tools, Fastenal, plumbing, kitchen, millwork, fabric store, upholstery service, sign shop, a day labor pool, etc.

Recommendation Two: *Allow Wells Stockyard to develop naturally—it serves a purpose.*

People who are shopping at Wells Stockyard are seeking bargains and they like to shop. The Stockyard helps to attract visitors to the area and proper signage directing them to other venues in town may increase sales in other shops in the area.

Recommendation Three: *Encourage the redevelopment of Wallace Crossings into a cluster of eclectic shops, second-hand stores, antique stores, and restaurants.*

Presently there are three tenants: Things, Midtown Internet Sweepstakes, and Golden City Restaurant. Suggest attracting the following to locate there: Goodwill, a party store, consignment shops, antique store, art store, toy and hobby store, Big Lots, an ice cream store, a family Italian restaurant, pet store, Game Stop, etc.

Recommendation Four: *Encourage the redevelopment of the Town 'N Country Shopping Plaza into a charter school, church conference area or entertainment complex.*

A charter school would provide the town and surrounding communities with an alternative for educating their children.

Church conference facilities are popular for retreats and revivals. They consist of meeting, dining, lodging and recreational facilities. It might be possible to contact various denominations or councils to determine interest. When not used by the churches, the facility could be rented to other groups—such as families for reunions. The only problem with this might be that other church conference facilities are located in more scenic locations.

An entertainment complex such as the one in Kinston (Galaxy of Sports) might be feasible. This complex includes a roller/inline skating rink, bowling lanes, video arcade and a fitness gym. A discount movie (dollar) theater showing second run films might also enhance the mix. According to Wikipedia, "...dollar theatres do prove popular with some demographics. Often, lower-income families will see a movie in a dollar theatre as their prices are often easier to afford. In addition, teenagers, youth-groups, retired people, and large families with many children will also go see movies in dollar theatres, where they can

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be entertained at an inexpensive price. Discount theatres are also a way for busy people who missed seeing a movie at the first theatre release to get a chance to watch it on the big screen.”

Another possible use would be as an assisted living facility, however the State Health Facilities Plan projects that there is a surplus of assisted living facility beds in Duplin County through 2015.

Recommendation Five: *Create a Highway 117 Corridor Appearance Advisory Council*

The Council would identify and reward businesses on the corridor that make an effort to improve the curb appeal of the business. The Council could also advise the town on the needs of the businesses on the corridor.

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Implementation—Action Steps

1. Read the plan thoroughly. Check out the resource links.
2. Read “Organizing a Successful Downtown Revitalization Program Using the Main Street Approach.”
3. Hire the new Planning/Economic/Community Director. Set priorities for him/her. Define his/her working relationships with groups in community.
4. Have a kickoff event to meet the new Planning/Economic/Community Director. This helps to demonstrate that this is a new start on the revitalization effort. Celebrate past accomplishments. Create a special award (like a train engine with a plaque on it) to give those who are pulling the effort along. Could be a rotating award given quarterly or yearly.
5. Establish the Downtown Merchants’ Association.
6. Establish the Highway 117 Corridor Appearance Advisory Council.
7. Join the Downtown Development Association.
8. Create the Access database of commercial properties in the downtown Commercial Historic District.
9. Create the Access database of the commercial properties on the Highway 117 corridor.
10. When identifying these commercial properties, note properties that are too dilapidated to be renovated. Begin process to address these structures per town ordinances.
11. Create a Wallace Economic Development website.
12. Create an email database of commercial building owners, merchants, Town Council members, Wallace Revitalization Association members, Chamber of Commerce members, Committee of 100 members, James Sprunt Community College SBC Center Director, Duplin Economic Development Director, Duplin Planning Director, bankers, realtors, and other interested partners and citizens.
13. Send a weekly newsletter to those in the email database.
14. Prioritize the recommendations in this document and pick a few to begin working on immediately (low hanging fruit).
15. Start tracking progress and create a scrapbook (online or hard copy).
16. Get an estimate of the cost of developing branding materials. Determine how it could be funded.
17. Get an estimate of the cost of moving the utility lines off Main Street onto parallel streets. Determine how it could be funded.
18. Reapply for the Small Town Main Street program and the NC STEP program when the deadlines roll around again.
19. Pick 3 or 4 community leaders to go with the new Planning/Economic/Community Director to visit with Sue Moffat-Thomas Executive Director of Swiss Bear, Inc. in New Bern and other towns with successful revitalization programs.
20. Involve youth and members of community in projects in as many ways as possible. Conduct contests with nominal prizes.
21. Make monthly reports on progress to the Town Council.
22. Celebrate successes.

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Photographs—Wallace—Highway 117 Corridor



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Photographs—Wallace—Downtown Commercial Historic District



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Photographs--Other Places



Example of a sidewalk being used for café tables. Note sandwich board sign.



Example of a mural on a building.

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Example of directional signs for businesses in a downtown area that had more than one street.



Example of trees, landscaping and benches.

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Example of a tree-lined street Main Street.



Example of a parking area that doubles as a gathering/performing space.



Example of an informational kiosk.



Examples of benches as street art.



Example of city street scene.

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Resources

20 Small Business Ideas for Small Towns

<http://files.mccrayandassoc.com/downloads/BizIdeaBooklet.pdf>

A Commercial District Revitalization Framework Plan for Downtown Cambridge, Maryland

<http://www.cambridgemainstreet.com/uploads/file/MarketAnalysisfinalsept09.pdf>

Arts, Culture and Design in Rural North Carolina

<http://www.ncarts.org/elements/docs/Rural%20Arts%20RTS.pdf>

Cambridge, MD: Economic Development

<http://www.choosecambridge.com/index.php/economic-development/>

Citizen Retail Recruitment

Clayton, MO—citizen retail recruitment using a mobile app business card:

http://www.claytonmo.gov/Business/Economic_Development/Citizen_Retail_Recruitment.htm

Downtown and Business District Market Analysis: Tools to Create Economically Vibrant Commercial Districts in Small Cities

<http://fyi.uwex.edu/downtown-market-analysis/>

Downtown Inventory examples of report

<http://www.cityofsalem.net/DEPARTMENTS/URBANDEVELOPMENT/DEPARTMENTPROJECTS/Pages/DowntownInventory.aspx>

Downtown Merchants' Associations--Examples:

Westport: <http://www.westportdma.com/wdma/>

Frisco: <http://www.downtownfrisco.com/>

Fairhope: <http://www.fairhopemerchants.com/>

Dunedin: <http://www.delightfuldunedin.com/>

Fort Collins: <http://www.downtownfortcollins.com/>

Blacksburg: <http://www.downtownblacksburg.com/>

Durham: <http://downtownmerchantsassociation.org/>

Tryon: <http://downtowntryon.org/main-street/economic-development/>

Downtown New Bern Merchants' blog:

<http://downtownnewbern.blogspot.com/>

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Do Your Business Here—Raleigh website

<http://www.godowntownraleigh.com/do-business/incentives-and-business-resources>

Fueling Your Business in North Carolina: A guide to financing for small businesses

<https://www.ncsbc.net/images/fuelingyourbusiness.pdf>

Future of small towns—idea generator

A whole website devoted to economic development ideas contributed by ordinary citizens of small Minnesota communities: <http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/projects/2005/04/smalltowns/>

Lincolnton, NC Downtown Redevelopment website

<http://www.ci.lincolnton.nc.us/bizcommdev.html>

Municipal Service Tax District: New Bern, NC

<http://www.downtownnewbern.com/pages/projects-bear-plaza.htm>

<http://www.newbern-nc.org/Fin/documents/MSD.pdf>

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National Trust for Historic Preservation

<http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/nonprofit-public-funding.html>

NC Main Street Program

<http://www.nccommerce.com/cd/urban-development/main-street-program>

Organizing a Successful Downtown Revitalization Program Using the Main Street Approach

http://www.commerce.wa.gov/_cted/documents/ID_160_Publications.pdf

Planning for an Agricultural Future: A Guide for North Carolina Farmers and Local Governments

http://www.farmlandinfo.org/documents/31721/FINAL_NCP4Ag_AFT.pdf

Profiling the Shopping Behaviors of Elderly Consumers

http://gerontologist.oxfordjournals.org/content/18/5_Part_1/454.full.pdf

Site Selection: a Combination of Both Art and Science (for an entertainment center)

<http://www.whitehutchinson.com/printer-friendly/leisure/articles/SiteSelectionEntertainment.shtml>

Shop local campaigns for small towns:

<http://files.mccrayandassoc.com/downloads/shoplocal.pdf>

Spurring small to medium sized farms to become entrepreneurs

<http://www.joe.org/joe/2008october/rb2.php>

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Survey of Downtown Businesses and Owners (report example)

http://madisonct.org/Economic_Dev_Comm/docs/EDC%20Downtown%20Survey%20Summary%20Report.pdf

Surveying Business Owners

http://madisonct.org/Economic_Dev_Comm/docs/EDC%20Downtown%20Survey%20Summary%20Report.pdf

The Ten Principles for Rebuilding Neighborhood Retail

http://www.uli.org/ResearchAndPublications/Reports/~/_media/Documents/ResearchAndPublications/Reports/TenPrinciples/TP_NeighborhoodRetail.ashx

Thrive in NC

<http://thrivenc.com/smallbusiness/start-a-new-business>

Traffic Calming on Main Roads Through Rural Communities:

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/08067/>

Trees in small city retail business district:

http://www.naturewithin.info/CityBiz/BizSmlTn3Ps_JFor.pdf

Appendix

Organizing a Successful Downtown Revitalization Program Using the Main Street Approach

Downtown SWOT Analysis

Highway 117 SWOT Analysis

Downtown SWOT Rankings

Highway 117 SWOT Rankings

Community Demographics

ESRI Retail Leakage Report

2010 Average Daily Traffic Counts for Wallace

National Register of Historic Places Designation Form

Map/Aerial Downtown Commercial Historic District

Map/Aerial Highway 117 Corridor

Fact Sheet—NC Commercial Historic Preservation Tax Credits

FAQs--The Federal Historic Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit

Main Street Four Point Approach and Eight Guiding Principles

Central Business District and Highway Business District zoning

Building profile sheet

Citizen shopping survey

Business owner survey